

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Please amend claims 1, 16, and 17 as indicated below, wherein deleted material is indicated by strikethrough and added material is underlined. In addition, please add claims 38-48. A complete listing of claims pending in the application following entry of this Amendment are presented as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An article of footwear comprising:  
an upper for receiving a foot of a wearer; and  
a sole attached to said upper, said sole having at least one support element that includes:  
an exterior surface, wherein an upper portion and a lower portion of said exterior surface slope outward to form a ridge that encircles said at least one support element;  
at least one band encircling said exterior surface; and  
a structure that facilitates movable positioning of said at least one band with respect to said exterior surface to thereby alter deflection and stiffness characteristics of said at least one support element.
2. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 1, wherein said structure is attached to said at least one band.
3. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 2, wherein said structure is at least one flange extending from said at least one band.
4. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 3, wherein said at least one flange is formed integral with said at least one band.
5. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 3, wherein said at least one flange is proportioned and positioned such that a hand of the wearer may grasp said at least one flange.

6. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 1, wherein said structure is at least one access indentation formed in said exterior surface.

7. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 6, wherein said at least one access indentation extends along a longitudinal length of said at least one support element.

8. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 6, wherein said at least one access indentation forms a gap between said exterior surface and said at least one band.

9. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 6, wherein said at least one access indentation includes a plurality of access indentations.

10. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 9, wherein said plurality of access indentations includes four access indentations.

11. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 1, wherein said exterior surface includes at least one band indentation that removably receives said at least one band.

12. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 11, wherein said at least one band indentation extends laterally around said at least one support element.

13. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 1, wherein said at least one support element includes a plurality of support elements.

14. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 1, wherein said at least one support element is hollow.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) The article of footwear of claim 15, wherein a band indentation is formed in said ridge, said band indentation removably receiving said at least one band.

17. (Currently Amended) An article of footwear comprising:  
an upper for receiving a foot of a wearer; and

a sole attached to said upper, said sole having at least one support element that includes:

an exterior surface;

at least one band encircling said exterior surface; and

at least one flange attached to said at least one band and extending outward from  
said at least one band, said at least one flange facilitating movable positioning  
of said at least one band with respect to said exterior surface to thereby alter  
deflection and stiffness characteristics of said at least one support element.

18. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 17, wherein said at least one flange is proportioned and positioned such that a hand of the wearer may grasp said at least one flange.

19. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 17, wherein said at least one flange is formed integral with said at least one band.

20. (Original) An article of footwear comprising:

an upper for receiving a foot of a wearer; and

a sole attached to said upper, said sole having at least one support element that includes:

an exterior surface;

at least one band encircling said exterior surface and being movably positionable  
with respect to said exterior surface to thereby alter deflection and stiffness  
characteristics of said at least one support element; and

at least one access indentation defined by said exterior surface, said at least one access indentation forming a gap between said exterior surface and said at least one band to facilitate positioning of said band.

21. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 20, wherein said at least one access indentation extends along a longitudinal length of said at least one support element.

22. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 20, wherein said at least one access indentation includes a plurality of access indentations.

23. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 22, wherein said plurality of access indentations includes four access indentations.

24. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 20, wherein said exterior surface includes at least one band indentation that removably receives said at least one band.

25. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 24, wherein said at least one band indentation extends laterally around said at least one support element.

26. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 20, wherein an upper portion and a lower portion of said exterior surface slope outward to form a ridge that encircles said at least one support element.

27. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 26, wherein a band indentation is formed in said ridge, said band indentation removably receiving said at least one band.

28. (Original) An article of footwear comprising:  
an upper for receiving a foot of a wearer; and  
a sole attached to said upper, said sole having at least one support element that  
includes:  
an exterior surface;

a first band encircling said exterior surface and being movably positionable with respect to said exterior surface to thereby alter deflection and stiffness characteristics of said at least one support element;  
at least one access indentation defined by said exterior surface, said at least one access indentation forming a gap between said exterior surface and said first band to facilitate positioning of said first band; and  
a securing device for removably securing a position of said first band.

29. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 28, wherein said at least one access indentation extends along a longitudinal length of said at least one support element.

30. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 28, wherein said at least one access indentation includes a plurality of access indentations.

31. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 30, wherein said plurality of access indentations includes four access indentations.

32. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 28, wherein said securing device includes a first band indentation that removably receives said first band.

33. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 32 wherein said at least one support element includes a second band.

34. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 33, wherein said at least one support element has a first stiffness when said first band and said second band are disposed in said first band indentation, said support element has a second stiffness when only one of said first band and said second band are disposed in said first band indentation, and a third stiffness when neither said first band nor said second band are disposed in said first band indentation, said first stiffness being greater than said second stiffness and said second stiffness being greater than said third stiffness.

35. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 33, wherein said first band has a greater stiffness than said second band.

36. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 28, wherein said securing device includes a first band indentation and a second band indentation, said first band indentation and said second band indentation removably receiving said first band.

37. (Original) The article of footwear of claim 36, wherein said support element has a first stiffness when said first band is disposed in said first band indentation and said support element has a second stiffness when said first band is disposed in said second band indentation, said first band indentation being located at a longitudinal center of said support element and said second band indentation being located between an end of said at least one support element and said first band indentation.

38. (New) A method for modifying properties of a sole of an article of footwear, the method comprising steps of:

positioning a band in a first location with respect to an exterior surface of a support element of the sole to provide the support element with a first stiffness, the band having a configuration that extends around the support element; and  
repositioning the band to a second location with respect to the exterior surface to provide the support element with a second stiffness.

39. (New) The method recited in claim 38, wherein the steps of positioning and repositioning include grasping a flange that extends outward from the first band.

40. (New) The method recited in claim 38, wherein the steps of positioning and repositioning include utilizing an access indentation formed in the exterior surface to facilitate movement of the band.

41. (New) The method recited in claim 38, wherein the step of positioning includes selecting the first location to be a midpoint of the support element such that the first stiffness is greater than the second stiffness.

42. (New) The method recited in claim 38, further including a step of positioning other bands with respect to other support elements of the sole to select a stiffness of the sole.

43. (New) A method for modifying properties of a sole of an article of footwear, the method comprising steps of:

positioning a first band and a second band with respect to an exterior surface of a support element of the sole to provide the support element with a first stiffness, the first band and the second band having a configuration that extends around the support element; and

repositioning the first band and the second band with respect to the exterior surface to provide the support element with a second stiffness.

44. (New) The method recited in claim 43, wherein the steps of positioning and repositioning include grasping flanges that extends outward from the first band and the second band.

45. (New) The method recited in claim 43, wherein the steps of positioning and repositioning include utilizing access indentation formed in the exterior surface to facilitate movement of the first band and the second band.

46. (New) A method for modifying properties of a sole of an article of footwear, the method comprising steps of:

positioning a first band with respect to an exterior surface of a first support element of the sole to select a stiffness for the first support element, the first band having a configuration that extends around the first support element;

positioning a second band with respect to an exterior surface of a second support element of the sole to select a stiffness for the second support element, the second band having a configuration that extends around the second support element;

positioning a third band with respect to an exterior surface of a third support element of the sole to select a stiffness for the third support element, the third band having a configuration that extends around the third support element;

positioning a fourth band with respect to an exterior surface of a fourth support element of the sole to select a stiffness for the fourth support element, the fourth band having a configuration that extends around the fourth support element; and

repositioning at least one of the first band, the second band, the third band, and the fourth band to modify a stiffness of the sole.

47. (New) The method recited in claim 46, wherein the steps of positioning and repositioning include grasping flanges that extends outward from the bands.

48. (New) The method recited in claim 46, wherein the steps of positioning and repositioning include utilizing access indentations formed in the exterior surfaces to facilitate movement of the bands.